Tech Glossary for Seniors

A quick reference guide to common technology terms, explained in simple, everyday language. Created by the Cybersecurity Non-Profit (CSNP) to help seniors navigate the digital world with confidence.

Common Tech Terms Made Simple

App

Short for "application" - a program you download on your phone or tablet to do specific tasks, like checking weather or playing games.

Example: The Facebook app lets you see family photos on your phone.

Browser

The program you use to look at websites on the internet. Common browsers include Chrome, Safari, and Edge.

Example: You open your browser to search Google or read the news.

Cloud

A way to store your files (photos, documents) on the internet instead of just on your device, so you can access them anywhere.

Example: Saving photos to iCloud means they're safe even if you lose your phone.

Cookie

A small file that websites save on your device to remember your preferences and keep you logged in.

Example: Cookies help Amazon remember what's in your shopping cart.

Essential Terms to Know

Download

Copying a file from the internet to your device. The opposite is "upload" (sending files from your device to the internet).

Example: Downloading a photo from an email saves it to your computer.

Email

Electronic mail - sending written messages over the internet. Like regular mail, but instant and free.

Example: Sending a message to your grandchildren through Gmail or Outlook.

Firewall

A security system that blocks dangerous programs from entering your computer, like a security guard for your device.

Example: Windows Firewall protects your computer automatically in the background.

Link

Clickable text or buttons that take you to another webpage or file when you click them. Usually underlined or a different color.

Example: Clicking a blue underlined word in an email opens a website.

Security Terms You Should Know

Malware

Short for "malicious software" - any program designed to harm your computer or steal your information.

Example: A virus or program that locks your files until you pay money.

Password

A secret word or phrase that proves who you are when logging into accounts. Keep it private and make it strong.

Example: Using "Sunset2024!" instead of "password" to protect your email.

Phishing

Fake emails or messages that trick you into giving away personal information like passwords or credit card numbers.

Example: An email pretending to be from your bank asking you to "verify" your account.

Pop-up

A small window that suddenly appears on your screen, often containing ads or warnings. Many are fake or dangerous.

Example: A window claiming "You've won a prize!" that appears while browsing.

Scam

A trick to steal your money or personal information, often through fake phone calls, emails, or websites.

Example: Someone calling and pretending to be tech support asking for payment.

Spam

Unwanted junk emails, usually trying to sell you something or trick you. Like junk mail in your physical mailbox.

Example: Dozens of emails about products you never asked for.

Staying Safe and Connected

Update

A new version of software that fixes problems and adds security protections. Always install updates when asked.

Example: Your phone asking to install iOS 17 to stay secure.

Virus

A type of malware that spreads from device to device and can damage files or steal information.
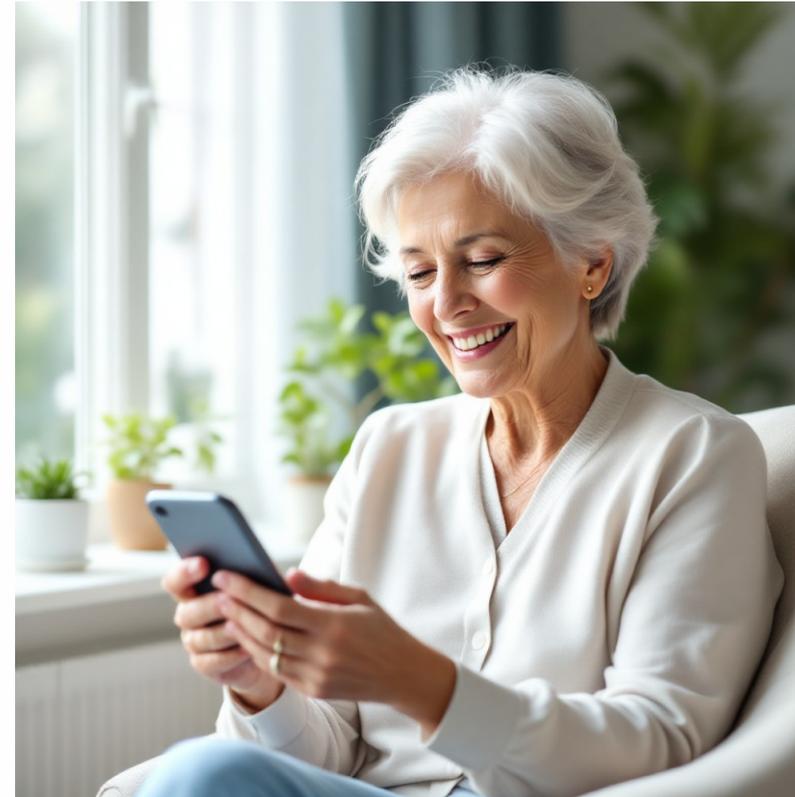
Example: Opening an infected email attachment that damages your files.

WiFi

Wireless internet connection that lets your devices connect to the internet without cables.

Example: Connecting your tablet to your home internet to browse websites.

Remember: If something online seems suspicious or too good to be true, it probably is. When in doubt, ask a trusted family member or friend for help before clicking or sharing information.

About Cybersecurity Non-Profit

"Making cybersecurity knowledge accessible to everyone through education, community, and practical resources."

01

Business & Non-Profit Security

Protecting organizations of all sizes

02

Family Cybersecurity

Keeping your household safe online

03

Kids Safety

Teaching children safe digital habits

04

Senior Digital Safety

Empowering seniors with confidence

05

Women's Security

Specialized protection and education

06

Parents & Educators

Resources for teaching and guidance

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